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Technology Transformation

With its 40,000-kilometre-long fibre communications network, Broadnet AS is connecting more than 90 Norwegian towns to high-speed data transfer and making broadband available to businesses, operators, and the public sector.

Images courtesy of Broadnet AS

The Norwegian market is very advanced and demands high-speed mobile services and data communication.

Broadnet AS is leading the way in that department with its nationwide fibre network and its commitment to ensuring businesses, operators, and the public sector are guaranteed maximum security and stability.

Broadnet AS was formed in 2010 when Northern European private equity company EQT purchased Hafslund Fiber and then Ventelo Holding a year later. It provides services such as VPN, internet, ethernet and dedicated capacity to end consumers and the wholesale market. The fast-paced growth of the national economy and the need for higher data transfer

volume, due to new services such as streaming, video conferencing and cloud services, is consistently driving the demand for Broadnet AS's fibre-optic solutions.

CEO Martin Lippert joined the business in November 2013. He is an economics graduate from the University of Aarhus and has a doctorate in the same field. He also studied at INSEAD: The Business School for the World. Prior to his appointment, he was CEO of telephone operator TDC Operations and was a member of the corporate management of TDC AS. He also has experience as the leader of TDC Business and as a director of Halberg Kapital AS.

Martin says that Norway is quite different to many other countries and has a much lower bandwidth—

around 3.6 MB—when compared to other regions such as Sweden's 25 MB. This gives Broadnet AS the perfect opportunity to continue to progress its operations to benefit the entire nation. Martin believes there needs to be a 'fibre revolution' and that new fibre areas need to be established.

Implementation can be quite expensive, though, and customers are not always prepared to pay the higher costs. As fibre is a relatively unknown product, Broadnet AS is working hard to make it more attractive to a wider range of organisations—from small businesses needing easy internet access to large companies with special requirements for network capacity and quality. "Our pure focus on the business market means that we can develop a deep >

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understanding of a customer's business, challenges and opportunities," Martin says. "This helps us to deliver market-leading quality and customer experience."

Last year, Broadnet AS completed a major upgrade of its 40,000-kilometre fibre network to meet the wants and needs of its clients now and in the future. This has resulted in an incredibly robust system which has a high degree of security and allows businesses to get broadband at higher speeds than ever before. The improvements took place on two levels. All access platforms (DSLAMs) were replaced to ensure transparent gateways to fibre and copper with maximum speeds, while innovative 'Super Core' networks were also built to ensure 400 GB speed. This initiative confirms Broadnet AS's ambition and position as a national and regional player in the sector for service, capacity, robustness and stability. More investments are underway to

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further contribute to reducing the vulnerability of Norway's digital infrastructure.

Broadnet AS also entered into a transformation partnership with communications provider Ericsson in 2014. An IP network agreement was signed by both parties last August and will span five years with the commitment to upgrade 125 metro rings in Norway. The agreement extends a long-term alliance first formed in 2006. The project is expected to lower Broadnet AS's operating expenses and will enable faster times for new services to go to market. Ericsson will supply IP routing, optical, and microwave solutions, providing Broadnet AS with an extensive portfolio of products and services.

Chief Technology Officer Per Morten Torvildsen says the collaboration is a great step forward for both companies: "Our network is constantly evolving and we are always seeking advanced

tools for improving the efficiency and quality of our services. Our transformation endeavours were primarily focused on simplifying the network. To this end, we decided to reduce the number of vendors from 22 to three. Ericsson was chosen based on the solid mix of own and partner products and the ability to deliver a wide range of professional services. We expect that transformation will allow us to lower operational costs while meeting the growing demand for high-speed services."

Head of Ericsson Norway, Aksel Aanensen, agrees that there are many benefits from working together: "We are happy to continue our long-term partnership with Broadnet AS and are proud to be selected as one of very few vendors for the network transformation. We look forward to supporting Broadnet AS in meeting its goals to achieve a simple and robust network with advanced services now and in the years to come."



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Furthermore, Broadnet AS struck a deal with Norwegian Healthnet in February this year. The agreement is to build a new nationwide network of amply available health care to answer increasing expectations from customers. As part of this, Broadnet AS will use existing fibre networks and newly created infrastructure. Ultimately, it will be a secure digital arena for all stakeholders in the health sector to communicate and exchange personal data and patient information in a lawful, safe, and efficient manner.

Martin says he is proud to be involved as it provides a unique opportunity to be a part of building a future for the country's health sector. The project will also reinforce Broadnet AS's role as a national player. "There are strict requirements for us as a supplier, both in operation and delivery," Martin admits. "But we see

Norwegian Healthnet as a perfect partner—they have a clear strategy on highly available high-capacity networks. Bandwidth and uptime is becoming increasingly critical business, and enough routing paths will be an important factor."

While Broadnet AS sits in a strong market position today, it hasn't always been that way. Martin says it travelled a bumpy road for around five years but has since managed to turn its operations around. Losses occurred due to restructuring, staff cuts, a competitive market and disloyal customers. In the first quarter of 2014, the company's cash flow was back in the black and things have been looking up ever since.

A highlight on the Broadnet AS calendar each year is the national Fibre Day which it hosts for the IT and telecom industry. In March 2015, the popular event

was held at Chateau Neuf in Oslo. There was a record number of attendees with more than 950 politicians, journalists and IT industry representatives coming along to enjoy the day. A common theme this year was 'security' and several guest speakers dealt with the topic in relation to computers and cybercrime. Martin was one of the presenters and he was joined on stage by the likes of The Pirate Bay's Peter Sunde, Transport Minister Ketil Solvik-Olsen, and Amazon Web Services' Ian Massingham.

Broadnet AS will continue to connect the Norwegian community with the continual creation and upkeep of its fibre-optic networks, allowing for the quick transfer of data and high-speed internet. This will enable the nation to grow in more ways than one and to position it at the forefront of the digital age. •